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AUTHOR	Ward, Robert E.; Wood, Bryce
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ABSTRACT

Area studies are calculated to restore a measure of cultural equilibrium to any American-based endeavor, to supply basic data from a rich variety of cultural contexts, and to add orderly descriptions, analyses, and interpretations of economic, political, and social systems other than American. This pamphlet details the interest of the Social Science Research Council in fostering foreign area studies, detailing academic programs, area-related programs, and the International Research and Exchange Board. It becomes apparent from this report that insofar as there has been overall planning, coordination, or evaluation on a national scale for the field of foreign area studies, the Social Science Research Council has supplied it in part or whole. A further effort must now be made to formulate and synthesize data already collected in cross-cultural and comparative terms. It seems probable that the influence of the Social Science Research Council, critical in the origins and past development of area studies, will continue to be of major importance. (Author/PG)

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FOREIGN AREA STUDIES AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL

by Robert E. Ward and Bryce Wood *

FEW even of those professionally active at the time recall with clarity the conditions of foreign area studies and research in the United States during the years immediately preceding and following World War II. This is perhaps not surprising in the sense that there was so little of significance to be recalled. With the exception of those teachers, scholars, and students concerned with the study of the Western European societies and cultures traditionally of interest to Americans, there was virtually nothing. And, even where Western Europe was concerned, our interests were highly selective. They focused primarily on Great Britain and secondly on France and Germany. With some exceptions in such fields as history, art, and belles lettres, there was very little systematic scholarly attention paid to Spain, Italy, the Scandinavian countries, or the smaller states of Western Europe, let alone Eastern Europe or the U.S.S.R. In an academic sense, particularly from the standpoint of the social sciences, these continued to be white areas on the map, *terrae incognitae,* well into the 1950's.

* Both authors have long records of association with the Social Science Research Council. Mr. Ward, now Director of the Center for Research in International Studies, Stanford University, and a member of the Council's board of directors since 1965, received a predoctoral Area Research Training Fellowship of the Council in 1948, the first year in which the fellowships were offered. In 1952 he was a participant in the Interuniversity Summer Research Seminar on Comparative Politics, held under the Council's program. Since 1958 he has been deeply involved in Council activities. As a member of the Committee on Comparative Politics, 1958-72, he was an active participant and contributor to conferences and projects, notably as codirector with Dankwart A. Rustow of its seminar on political modernization of Japan and Turkey, September 1962, and senior editor of the resulting volume, *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, Studies in Political Development 3, Princeton University Press, 1964; as senior author of the committee-sponsored manual, *Studying Politics Abroad. Field Research in the Developing Areas*, Little, Brown and Company, 1964; and participant in the workshop on the modernization of political culture, July–August 1962. As a member of the Council's board of directors, Mr. Ward served as its chairman, 1969–71, and as a representative of the Council on the Conference Board of Associated Research Councils, 1969–72. He was also a member of the Committee on Problems and Policy, 1966–73. His other major contributions to the Council's work have been as a member of the Joint Committee (cosponsored with the American Council of Learned Societies) on Japanese Studies since its appointment in 1967 and as its chairman, 1971–74. Particularly noteworthy is his direction of the American participants in the United States – Japan joint bibliographical project on the Allied Occupation of Japan; he organized and coordinated the efforts that resulted in the publication by the American Library Association in March 1974 of *The Allied Occupation of Japan, 1945–1952: An Annotated Bibliography of Western-Language Materials*. Mr. Ward was also a member of the Joint Committee on Asian Studies, 1958–61, and chairman of the Committee on Area and Language Programs Review, 1968–72.

Mr. Wood's first association with the Council was as a predoctoral Field Fellow in 1936–37. He joined the Council staff in 1950 and served for 23 years. In the words of the tribute paid him by the Council's board of directors upon his retirement in September 1973 (*Items*, December 1973, page 52), "he has been closely and constantly associated with the work and accomplishments of many of our most distinguished and successful committees. Particularly notable among these were the Committees on Political Behavior, on Comparative Politics, on Contemporary China, on Japanese Studies, and—continuously—the Committee on Latin American Studies." The other committees with which he worked were Civil-Military Relations Research, Comparative Study of Public Policy, Cross-Cultural Education, Exchanges with Asian Institutions, Foreign Area Fellowship Program (as deputy director for Latin American studies, 1970–73), Governmental and Legal Processes, International Cooperation among Social Scientists, International Organization, Korean Studies, National Security Policy Research, Near and Middle East, Political Theory and Legal Philosophy Fellowships, Slavic Studies Subcommittee on Grants, and World Area Research. Mr. Wood was a member of the Committee on International Exchange of Persons (of the Conference Board of Associated Research Councils), 1950–57. He is currently engaged in research, supported by a Grant-in-Aid from the American Council of Learned Societies, on the policy of the United States toward the Ecuador-Peru boundary dispute, 1940–74, and the politics of the parties to the dispute.

This article was written at the invitation of the President of the Council as part of the commemoration of its 50th anniversary year.

As a consequence the postwar contrasts between the vastly expanded national and popular interests, involvements, and responsibilities of the United States on the one hand and the increasingly outdated professional concerns and competencies of our higher educational system on the other rapidly became more obvious and less tolerable to all who cared to look. Still nothing need have happened by way of constructive response on the academic side. The conserving capacities of academic establishments have been too frequently demonstrated to substantiate so facile a belief. The fact that positive and enduring steps were taken require, therefore, some explanation.

There were, to begin with, certain predisposing changes in the national environment. While World War I may have sufficed to bring the United States massively into the international arena for the first time, it did not really end our national isolationism in the political, economic, or psychological senses. The interwar years were a time of tentative and highly selective advances, often followed by compensatory withdrawals, and of episodically increased foreign contacts and involvements, but not of enduring or widespread commitment to a more internationalized pattern of collective life and action. It was only World War II that accomplished that—at least for the period down to the present. It is particularly notable for our purposes that it did so in terms that were no longer exclusively Eurocentric but embraced as well the nations and cultures of what we term variously the non-West, the Third World, or the developing nations. Even within Europe the postwar focus differed. No longer were we continuously interested only in Britain, France, and Germany. The U.S.S.R., Eastern Europe, and ultimately the rest of Europe, as well, bulked far larger on our agenda of national concern and involvement.

Still in an academic sense little or nothing of enduring value need have happened had there not been an energizing and organizing medium at hand. This was the role of the Social Science Research Council acting in concert with the American Council of Learned Societies, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Rockefeller Foundation, and, later, with the Ford Foundation. What actually took place is little known, even in many of the scholarly circles most directly concerned. It constitutes a fascinating example of how in at least one instance academic innovation on a major national and international scale was launched and sustained.

The immediate stimulus lay in experiences associated with World War II. This had involved the United States in an unprecedented number and variety of interactions with societies that lay largely beyond our normal sphere of national concern or involvement. Japan, China, India, Burma, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Algeria are appropriate examples. It did not make a great deal of difference whether the specific involvement was hostile or friendly. In either event it served to make painfully obvious our almost total unpreparedness as a nation to deal effectively with the problems consequent upon a sudden intensification of American contacts with these almost totally unfamiliar societies and cultures. Few Americans knew the languages involved; those who did were apt to lack the sorts of professional skills needed. That working modicum of familiarity with the relevant historical, political, economic, social, and psychological facts that we could as a government muster and utilize in our dealings with Britain, France, and Germany was almost entirely lacking for these more exotic areas. This deficit had to be made up—and this had to be done under the most urgent and demanding circumstances, those of modern and total warfare.

Since the problem was initially one of providing intensive and specialized training in unfamiliar languages and cultures, the government turned to the universities and to the research Councils for assistance. Existing academic resources in these fields were pitifully thin but, under wartime conditions and with extensive federal support, specialized training programs were hastily improvised, improved over time, and ultimately some rather impressive results were achieved. Furthermore, the graduates of these specialized training programs—many of whom were graduate students or young faculty members—were sent out in unprecedented numbers to live or work with the peoples and problems of the areas they had studied, thus creating a reservoir of potential professional interest and at least partially trained talent for postwar development. The Ethnogeographic Board was established in 1942 by the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Research Council, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Social Science Research Council for the purpose of aiding the Army, Navy, and other agencies in obtaining the information they needed on foreign regions throughout the war years. It arranged for the preparation of a history and appraisal of its work and experience for the guidance of future organization of the resources for increasing knowledge of foreign areas and cultures.

Thus even at the time there were observers of these phenomena concerned about their postwar implications and anxious that the momentum for constructive academic change implicit within them not be lost in the more relaxed circumstances that were certain to attend the ending of the war. In general they tended to share some or all of the following views:

1. Higher education in the United States was too narrow in its geographic compass.

2. It must be broadened to include non-Western peoples and cultures.
3. More attention should be paid the U.S.S.R. and the nations of Eastern Europe.
4. The most fruitful way to study such academically "new" areas was by the so-called whole-cultural or interdisciplinary techniques (largely anthropological in antecedents) adumbrated in the wartime training programs.
5. Since the traditional departmental units of a university were discipline oriented and presumptively hostile to interdisciplinary innovations, a new organizational format would have to be devised for these new interdisciplinary programs, to wit—a foreign area program.
6. Finally, great emphasis should be placed on intensive instruction in the spoken and written forms of the languages of the particular foreign area being studied, preferably utilizing the techniques of language teaching developed in the wartime programs.

Prominent among the proponents of these views were strategically placed officials and staff of the Social Science Research Council, the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Research Council, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the Rockefeller Foundation. A loose but effective liaison and working arrangement soon emerged among them. The Social Science Research Council maintained a Committee on World Regions during 1943, and the three Councils, a Joint Exploratory Committee on World Area Research during 1945–46 to investigate the feasibility of an inter-Council program. Meanwhile the Social Science Research Council, convinced of the need for an appraisal of the situation, in 1946 had engaged Robert B. Hall to make a comprehensive survey of area programs in universities. Both foundations, dealing directly with the universities concerned, had financed on a highly selective basis the establishment of new or the expansion of older area and language programs. In the first instance these related largely to Latin American, Russian, Japanese, or Chinese studies. Hall's survey of these programs led, while in process, to appointment by the SSRC of its own Committee on World Area Research (1946–53). This committee assisted in the completion of the survey, sponsored its publication [1] and the subsequent national conference on the study of world areas (for which the Carnegie Corporation provided funds),[2] and recommended that the Council offer an Area Research Training Fellowship Program. When the funds for this program were obtained from the Carnegie Corporation late in 1947, a separate Committee on Area Research Training Fellowships was appointed to administer it.

Much more than money is required to launch effectively and on a national scale new and controversial academic programs of this sort. There must also be a means of occasionally assembling from their several campuses the actual working leaders of the movement, of comparing and taking stock of the success or failure of specific types of innovations and organizational forms, of achieving visibility and wider recognition for the programs' accomplishments, of recruiting and training new adherents to the area cause, and of assessing in national terms the progress and needs of the movement. All of these were met in practice largely by the Council's Committees on World Area Research and Area Research Training Fellowships (1947–53). All of the early major reports on the status and development of area studies programs in the United States were products of the former committee.[3] An impressive proportion of those who subsequently became prominent as exponents of the area approach in either their teaching or research got their starts as Area Research Training Fellows under the program administered by the latter. It is not unfair to conclude that these committees served in the early days as the primary planning, coordinating, training, and evaluative agencies at the national level for the entire area and language movement in the United States.

What might be considered the first or early stage of foreign area studies programs in the United States runs from about 1946–47 to 1959–60, a period of some 13 years. During this time there were relatively few such programs, they were largely graduate in nature, they were concentrated at a small number of major universities, they related primarily to East Asia or the U.S.S.R., and they were financed in part by local funds and in part by the two major foundations.[4]

Two events mark the termination of this early period: the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958 (and its activation the following year), marking the advent of interest in and large-scale support for area programs by the federal government; and the beginning

[1] Robert B. Hall, *Area Studies: With Special Reference to Their Implications for Research in the Social Sciences*, Social Science Research Council Pamphlet 3, May 1947.

[2] Charles Wagley, *Area Research and Training: A Conference Report on the Study of World Areas*, Social Science Research Council Pamphlet 6, June 1948.

[3] In addition to the reports by Hall and Wagley, Julian H. Steward, *Area Research: Theory and Practice*, Social Science Research Council Bulletin 63, 1950, and Wendell C. Bennett, *Area Studies in American Universities*, Social Science Research Council, 1951.

[4] During this earlier period the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies jointly sponsored the very active Committee on Slavic Studies, appointed in 1948 and terminated only in 1971, and also the Committee on Southern Asia, 1949–53. The Social Science Research Council maintained the Committee on the Near and Middle East from 1951 until 1959, when it became a joint committee of the two Councils.

of relatively massive support of a larger number of selected area programs by the Ford Foundation at about the same time.

Even before the end of this first phase, however, the area activities of the Social Science Research Council began to change and diversify. The Committees on World Area Research and Area Research Training Fellowships were terminated in 1953, while in 1954 the Council established for the first time a new and more specialized type of body, the Committee on Comparative Politics. Strictly speaking this was not an area committee at all. Its primary mandate involved the rejuvenation and restructuring of a major field within the discipline of political science, that of comparative government. In practice, however it had a strong interest in the politics of the developing non-Western nations as a whole and in the subject of political modernization or political development. A good deal of its work was in this way area-related, though the basic context was comparative and generalizing in nature. The advent of the Committee on Comparative Politics marks the first systematic and organized national attempt within the framework of a particular discipline to build upon and go beyond programs relating to a specific geographical or culture area. It was a particularly successful venture that drew to a close only in 1972 when the committee was terminated and in part succeeded by a new Committee on the Comparative Study of Public Policy, a body with an area base and interest in the developed societies of Western Europe, North America, and Japan and a primary interest in the performance characteristics of highly developed modern political systems. These comparatively and topically oriented committees are in a measure related to the earlier area-specific interests and activities of the Council, and may be regarded as at least in part a consequence of those interests.

The main stream of development in the Council's area activities after 1959–60, however, lay along more specialized lines. The initial endeavor of establishing and maintaining a relatively small number of outstanding area programs mainly in the Soviet and East Asian fields had succeeded. The advent of new funding for university area centers in 1959–60 by the Ford Foundation and Title VI of the National Defense Education Act made it possible to recognize what was by then a very sizable national demand and to establish a much larger and more diversified group of new area programs throughout the United States. The Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies acknowledged these changed circumstances by establishing in two cycles a total of 7 joint area committees.

In 1959–60 came the Joint Committees on African Studies, Contemporary China, Latin American Studies, and the Near and Middle East, all under the administrative aegis of the Social Science Research Council. In the preceding year the Joint Committee on Asian Studies, for which the American Council of Learned Societies had administrative responsibility, had been appointed specifically to sponsor a new program of research grants to individual scholars. Somewhat later, in 1967, the Joint Committees on Japanese Studies and on Korean Studies were added. All were financed basically through grants from the Ford Foundation, as was the continuing Joint Committee on Slavic Studies. All save the Committee on Asian Studies had quite expansive mandates that usually involved not only the administration of programs of research grants, but also continuing assessments of the state of the field, the conduct of conferences and seminars, and the stimulation of new research or other activities of general and basic utility to the area field concerned. The 1960's thus brought a marked intensification of the area-oriented activities of the Social Science Research Council.

In addition to these basic area committees the Councils also established a variety of other more specialized but area-related programs. Most notable among these was the Joint Committee on the Foreign Area Fellowship Program appointed in 1962 when the Ford Foundation transferred responsibility for the program it had offered since 1953 to the Councils. This transfer consolidated their activities with respect to predoctoral training fellowships of an area-specific sort for all parts of the world. Continuously financed by the Ford Foundation, this program shortly became the most prestigious and one of the most important sources of advanced language and area training in the United States. In 1973 the program was merged with other area research programs of the Councils in order to relate the dissertation research fellowships more closely to the other concerns of the area committees.

Somewhat similar in nature but with a more specialized clientele is the International Research and Exchanges Board established in 1968 as a joint agency administered by the American Council of Learned Societies. This Board conducts the official exchange programs between the United States and 7 Eastern European states: Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the U.S.S.R., and Yugoslavia. The programs provide both advanced training and research opportunities for faculty members and graduate students.

More specialized still are such committees as that on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China appointed in 1966 jointly by the National Academy of Sciences and the two Councils; the Joint Committee on Sino-American Cooperation in the Humanities and Social Sciences (1966–); and the Com-

mittee on Exchanges with Asian Institutions maintained by the Social Science Research Council from 1961 to 1972. The latter two committees have been concerned with research in and about China conducted in Taiwan. The first has played a leading role in the academic and cultural aspects of the negotiations that have been leading toward the establishment of scholarly relations with the People's Republic of China.

Another type of area-specific agency was represented by the Committee on Social Science in Italy (1965–73), jointly sponsored with the Adriano Olivetti Foundation. This committee was concerned with the improvement of the quality of advanced social science training in Italian universities. It was binational in membership and primarily operated three postgraduate training institutes—in economics, sociology, and political science, located respectively at Ancona, Milan, and Turin. The American share of the financing for these operations came from the Ford Foundation, the Italian share from the Olivetti Foundation and the National Research Council of Italy. The committee was dissolved when adequate Italian resources had been mobilized, and has been succeeded by a national committee in Italy.

A somewhat similar but much more general endeavor to improve the quality of research and training abroad has been carried on by the Committee on Transnational Social Psychology (1964–74), largely through multinational conferences in Western and Eastern Europe and in Latin America.

Mention should be made also of the comprehensive review of foreign area studies in American academic institutions, which the Council undertook in 1968 at the request of the U.S. Office of Education. The study was directed by Richard D. Lambert of the University of Pennsylvania, who had the assistance of an advisory committee appointed by the Council. His massive and definitive *Language and Area Studies Review* was published in 1973 by the American Academy of Political and Social Science as its Monograph 17.

During the 25 years from the end of World War II to 1970, therefore, the Social Science Research Council established, predominantly in collaboration with the American Council of Learned Societies, nearly a score of area-specific or area-related programs, most of which still exist. A few of the committes appointed to administer such programs have fulfilled their mandates and been discharged. The functions of some of these former committees, especially those related to administration of programs of research grants, have been taken over by newer programs such as those offered under the auspices of the Joint Committees on Eastern Europe (1971–), South Asian Studies (1972–), and Soviet Studies (1971–). The possibility of inaugurating new joint committees with general mandates for the development of area research and training on Western Europe, South Asia, and Southeast Asia is under consideration.

As one reviews the history of these postwar years it becomes apparent that, insofar as there has been overall planning, coordination, or evaluation on a national scale for the field of foreign area studies, it has been supplied in large part by the committees and staff of the Social Science Research Council. No claim to exclusivity is involved. Other agencies have also been active and influential along these lines, to cite a few: the major foundations already named, particularly the Ford Foundation, whose officers have demonstrated both leadership and generosity in the field of foreign area training and research; the American Council of Learned Societies; the U.S. Office of Education's Institute of International Studies; the several national associations of area specialists; and—in specific cases—the area scholars on a given campus together with their local administrators. But, while freely conceding this diversity of influence and paternity, the role of the Social Science Research Council has been unique and fundamental in a number of critical ways.

The basic ideas and organizing concepts that led to the postwar establishment of foreign area studies programs derive from the Committee on World Area Research working with a few sympathetic and supportive foundation officers. The early surveys of the problems and progress of such programs that contributed a great deal to the shaping of developmental and organizational patterns and policies at the critical initial stages were entirely the product of that committee. In important measure it was the success of these early area ventures that undergirded, justified, and provided the models for the dramatic expansion of university area centers financed by the Ford Foundation and the U.S. Office of Education in the early 1960's. Since then it has been largely the joint area committees of the Councils that have performed a variety of functions essential to the continued health and vitality of the collective area endeavor. Because these functions have come to be taken more or less for granted, they merit more attention and emphasis.

Ultimately scholarly ventures of national scale and significance succeed or fail not only in terms of the intrinsic merits and persuasiveness of their organizing concepts but also in terms of the degree of durable academic acceptance and support that they generate. It is axiomatic in the profession that such durable acceptance and support can only be based on a substantial measure of meaningful participation by working scholars in whatever venture may be concerned. Herein lies the true genius of the Social Science Research Council. Together

with the American Council of Learned Societies, it has provided the most effective and continuing means of enlisting and focusing in a disciplined and systematic way the talents, ideas, and energies of scholars working on problems of great professional importance in the area field. It combines the advantages of transcending the individual campuses and disciplines; of long and close identification with the interests of scholars and scholarship; and of a skilled and dedicated professional staff which lends support and continuity to the undertakings of its committees. It represents the interests and views of scholarship to foundation and governmental agencies, and has an enviable reputation for identifying and dealing effectively with many problems that have confronted the social sciences during the last 50 years. These are unique attributes, not found in equal measure or quality in any of the other agencies of collective action generated by the academic community, the government, or the foundations. Their merits and efficacy in practice are nowhere better illustrated than in the case of area studies programs.

Not only was the Council responsible in major degree for the initial establishment and subsequent expansion of such programs, but it has continued to monitor and influence their further development. Within the context of the social sciences, it has long been obvious that area-specific knowledge by itself is not enough. This is not to gainsay the essentiality or the importance of such data. It is an unfortunate fact that a large proportion of the raw data available to social scientists is American in provenance. As a consequence, both the methodologies and the theories of contemporary social science have to an unrealistic and perhaps critically unsound degree been built on bases that are predominantly or exclusively derived from American practice and experience. Thus while we recognize in principle the importance of culture as a determinant of social attitudes, values, and behavior, in practice we have too often proceeded along lines that may prove to be disastrously culture-bound.

From a social science viewpoint, the initial value and essentiality of area studies and of the Council's role in their development derives from this limitation of American experience. Area studies are calculated to restore a measure of cultural equilibrium to an otherwise American-biased endeavor, to supply basic data from a rich variety of cultural contexts, and to add thereto orderly descriptions, analyses, and interpretations of economic, political, and social systems other than our own.

By themselves these are valid and valuable contributions, but they are not in the long run sufficient. A further effort must be made to transcend the limits of particular cultures and to formulate and synthesize these expanded and enriched data in cross-cultural and comparative terms. This is the probable next step in the area undertaking and, also, a point of juncture with the professional interests and activities of the more American-oriented members of the social science community.

The Council has long been aware of these circumstances and of the opportunities and problems implicit in them. It is concerned with determining its own future role and contribution to the further development of the social science aspects of area studies programs. It seems probable that its influence, seminal and critical in the origins and past development of area studies, will continue to be of major importance.